

IN THE CLAIMS:

The following is a complete listing of the claims, and replaces all earlier version and listings.

1. (currently amended) A signature processing method for displaying a signature on a display unit, comprising:

an inputting step, of inputting a signature handwritten by a user via a digitizer, the signature being composed of at least one stroke; and

a control step, of displaying the signature being inputted via the digitizer on the display unit in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature as the stroke is being inputted via the digitizer in said inputting step, while yet allowing ~~and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature as the stroke~~ [[,while the signature]] is inputted via the digitizer in said inputting step.

2. (previously presented) A signature processing method according to Claim 1, further comprising a determining step, of determining whether an instruction is given by the user to display the stroke of the signature in a manner such that it is difficult for the others to discern the stroke of the signature in a manner that it is difficult for the others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature,

wherein said control step is executed in response to a determination in said determining step that the instruction is given,

and wherein said control step includes displaying, in a normal fashion, the stroke of the signature being inputted via the digitizer on the display unit when it is

determined in said determining step that the instruction is not given.

3. (currently amended) A signature processing method according to Claim 1, ~~for displaying a signature on a display unit~~, further comprising:

a registering step, of registering ~~[[a]]~~ the signature inputted in said inputting step handwritten by a user via a digitizer, the signature being composed of at least one stroke which is inputted by a user via a digitizer;

~~----- a determining step, of determining whether an instruction is given by the user to display the stroke of the signature registered in said registering step when the user fails to remember a registered signature; and~~

~~----- a control step, of displaying the stroke of the signature registered in said registering step on the display unit in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature when it is determined in said determining step that the instruction is given;~~

4. (previously presented) A signature processing method according to Claim 1, wherein said control step includes displaying the stroke of the signature by using a combination of the color background and a color of the stroke of the signature, the combination being such as to make it difficult to discern the stroke of the signature.

5. (previously presented) A signature processing method according to Claim 1, wherein said control step includes displaying the stroke of the signature with an image pattern of the background in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the

signature.

6. (previously presented) A signature processing method according to Claim 1, wherein said control step includes displaying the stroke of the signature as broken lines in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature.

7. (previously presented) A signature processing method according to Claim 1, wherein said control step includes displaying only a portion of the stroke of the signature in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature.

8. (previously presented) A signature processing method according to Claim 7, wherein the portion of the stroke the signature is a portion of the stroke input within a predetermined period of time before a current input stroke time.

9. (previously presented) A signature processing method according to Claim 1, wherein said control step includes displaying the stroke of the signature in a flashing manner.

10. (previously presented) A signature processing method according to Claim 1, wherein the stroke of the signature comprises coordinate data which is input via the digitizer.

11. - 31. (canceled)

32. (currently amended) A signature processing apparatus for displaying a signature on a display unit, comprising:

inputting means for inputting a signature handwritten by a user via a digitizer, the signature being composed of at least one stroke; and

control means for displaying the signature being inputted via the digitizer on the display unit in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature as the stroke is being inputted via the digitizer by said inputting means, while yet allowing and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature[[, while the signature]] as the stroke is inputted via the digitizer by said inputting means.

33. (previously presented) A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 32, further comprising determining means for determining whether an instruction is given by the user to display the stroke of the signature in a manner such that it is difficult for the others to discern the stroke of the signature in a manner that it is difficult for the others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature,

wherein said control means operates in response to a determination by said determining means that the instruction is given,

and wherein said control means displays, in a normal fashion, the stroke of the signature being inputted via the digitizer on the display unit when it is determined by said determining means that the instruction is not given.

34. (currently amended) A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 32, for displaying a signature on a display unit, further comprising:

registering means for registering ~~[[a]]~~ the signature inputted by said inputting means, ~~handwritten by a user via a digitizer, the signature being composed of at least one stroke which is inputted by a user via a digitizer;~~

~~— determining means for determining whether an instruction is given by the user to display the stroke of the signature registered by said registering means when the user fails to remember a registered signature; and~~

~~— control means for displaying the stroke of the signature registered by said registering means on the display unit in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature when it is determined by said determining means that the instruction is given;~~

35. (previously presented) A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 32, wherein said control means displays the stroke of the signature by using a combination of the color background and a color of the stroke of the signature, the combination being such as to make it difficult to discern the stroke of the signature.

36. (previously presented) A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 32, wherein said control means displays the stroke of the signature with an image pattern of the background in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature.

37. (previously presented) A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 32, wherein said control means displays the stroke of the signature as broken lines in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature.

38. (previously presented) A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 32, wherein said control means displays only a portion of the stroke of the signature in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature.

39. (previously presented) A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 38, wherein the portion of the stroke the signature is a portion of the stroke input within a predetermined period of time before a current input stroke time.

40. (previously presented) A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 32, wherein said control means displays the stroke of the signature in a flashing manner.

41. (previously presented) A signature processing apparatus according to Claim 32, wherein the stroke of the signature comprises coordinate data which is input via the digitizer.

42. (currently amended) A signature processing program for displaying a signature on a display unit, comprising:

an inputting step, of inputting a signature handwritten by a user via a digitizer, the signature being composed of at least one stroke; and

a control step, of displaying the signature being inputted via the digitizer on the display unit in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature as the stroke is being inputted via the digitizer in said inputting step, while yet allowing and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature[[, while the signature]] as the stroke is inputted via the digitizer in said inputting step.

43. (previously presented) A signature processing program according to Claim 42, further comprising a determining step, of determining whether an instruction is given by the user to display the stroke of the signature in a manner such that it is difficult for the others to discern the stroke of the signature in a manner that it is difficult for the others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature,

wherein said control step is executed in response to a determination in said determining step that the instruction is given,

and wherein said control step includes displaying, in a normal fashion, the stroke of the signature being inputted via the digitizer on the display unit when it is determined in said determining step that the instruction is not given.

44. (currently amended) A signature processing program according to Claim 42, for displaying a signature on a display unit, further comprising:

a registering step, of registering [[a]] the signature inputted in said inputting step, handwritten by a user via a digitizer, the signature being composed of at least one

~~stroke which is inputted by a user via a digitizer;~~

~~————— a determining step, of determining whether an instruction is given by the user to display the stroke of the signature registered in said registering step when the user fails to remember a registered signature; and~~

~~————— a control step, of displaying the stroke of the signature registered in said registering step on the display unit in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature when it is determined said determining step that the instruction is given~~

45. (previously presented) A signature processing program according to Claim 42, wherein said control step includes displaying the stroke of the signature by using a combination of the color background and a color of the stroke of the signature, the combination being such as to make it difficult to discern the stroke of the signature.

46. (previously presented) A signature processing program according to Claim 42, wherein said control step includes displaying the stroke of the signature with an image pattern of the background in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature.

47. (previously presented) A signature processing program according to Claim 42, wherein said control step includes displaying the stroke of the signature as broken lines in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature.



48. (previously presented) A signature processing program according to Claim 42, wherein said control step includes displaying only a portion of the stroke of the signature in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature.

49. (previously presented) A signature processing program according to Claim 48, wherein the portion of the stroke the signature is a portion of the stroke input within a predetermined period of time before a current input stroke time.

50. (previously presented) A signature processing program according to Claim 42, wherein said control step includes displaying the stroke of the signature in a flashing manner.

51. (previously presented) A signature processing program according to Claim 42, wherein the stroke of the signature comprises coordinate data which is input via the digitizer.

52. (currently amended) A computer-readable storage medium storing a signature processing program, the program comprising:

an inputting step, of inputting a signature handwritten by a user via a digitizer, the signature being composed of at least one stroke; and

a control step, of displaying the signature being inputted via the digitizer on the display unit in a manner that makes it difficult for others to discern the stroke of the signature as the stroke is being inputted via the digitizer in said inputting step, while yet

allowing and that makes it possible for the user to discern the stroke of the signature[[  
while the signature]] as the stroke is inputted via the digitizer in said inputting step.